

*A Letter from M<sup>r</sup> William Nicolson, to the Reverend Mr Walker, Master of University Coll : in Oxford ; concerning a Runic Inscription at Beaucastle.*

**T**IS now high time to make good my promise of giving you a more perfect Account of our two *Runic* Inscriptions at *Beau-Castle* and *Bridekirk*. The former is fallen into such an untoward part of our Country, and so far out of the common Road, that I could not much sooner have either an opportunity, or the Courage to look after it. I was assur'd by the Curate of the place, (a Person of good sense & Learning in greater matters,) that the Characters were so miserably worn out since the Lord *William Howard's* time, (by whom they were communicated to *S<sup>r</sup> H. Spelman*, & mentioned by *Wormius*, *Mon. Dan.* p. 161,) that they were now wholly defaced, and nothing to be met with worth my while. The former part of this Relation I found to be true : for (tho' it appears that the forementioned Inscription has bin much larger then *Wormius* has given it, yet) 'tis at present so far lost, that, in six or seven lines, none of the Characters are fairly discernable, save only *ᚠ ᚦ ᚠ ᚱ ᚱ*; and these too are incoherent, and at great distance from each other. However, this *Epistilium Crucis* (as *S<sup>r</sup> H. Spelman*, in his Letter to *Wormius*, has called it,) is to this day a noble Monument; and highly merits the View of a Curious Antiquary. The best account, *S<sup>r</sup>*, I am able to give you of it, be p'leased to take as follows.

'Tis one entire Free-Stone of about five yards in height, washed over (as the Font at *Bridekirk*;) with a white oyl<sup>y</sup> Cement, to preserve it the better from the injuries

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of time and weather. The figure of it inclines to a square Pyramid; each side whereof is near two foot broad at the bottom, but upwards more tapering. On the West side of the Stone, we have three fair Draughts, which evidently enough manifest the Monument to be Christian. The Lowest of these represents the Pourtraiture of a Layman; with an Hawk, or Eagle, perch'd on his Arm. Over his head are the forementioned ruines of the Lord *Howard's* Inscription. Next to these, the Picture of some Apostle, Saint, or other Holy man, in a sacerdotal Habit, with a Glory round his Head. On the top stands the Effigies of the B. V. with the Babe in her Arms; and both their Heads encircled with Glories as before.

On the North we have a great deal of Checquer-work; subscribed with the following Characters, fairly legible.

|| 𐌹 𐌺 𐌹 𐌹 𐌹 𐌹 𐌹 𐌹 𐌹 𐌹 𐌹 𐌹 𐌹 𐌹 𐌹 𐌹 ||

Upon the first sight of these Letters, I greedily ventured to read them *Rynburu*: and was wonderfully pleased to fancy, that this word thus singly written, must necessarily betoken the final extirpation and *Burial* of the Magical *Rune* in these parts, reasonably hoped for, upon the Conversion of the *Danes* to the Christian Faith. For, that the *Danes* were antiently, as well as some of the *Laplanders* at present, gross Idolaters and Sorcerers, is beyond Controversy; and I could not but remember, that all our Historians tell us, that they brought their Paganism along with them into this Kingdome. And therefore 'twas not very difficult to imagine that they might for some time practise their *Hocus* tricks here in the North; where they were most numerous and least disturbed. This conceit was the more heightened, by reflecting upon the natural superstition of our Borderers at this day; who are much better acquainted with, and do  
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more firmly believe, their old Legendary stories of *Fayries* and *Witches*, then the Articles of their Creed. And to convince me yet further that they are not utter strangers to the *Black Arts* of their forefathers, I accidentally met with a Gentleman in the neighbourhood, who shewed me a Book of Spells and Magical Receipts, taken (two or three days before) in the pocket of one of our *Moss-Troopers*: wherein, among many other conjuring Feats, was prescribed a certain Remedy for an Ague, by applying a few barbarous Characters to the Body of the party disordered. These, methought, were very near akin to *Wormius's* R A M R U N E R; which, he says, differed wholly in figure and shape from the common *Runæ*. For, though he tells us, that these *Ram-runer* were so called, *Eo quod Molestias, dolores, morbosque hisce infligere inimicis soliti sint Magi*; yet his great friend *Arng: Jonas*, more to our purpose, says *that--His etiam usi sunt ad benefaciendum, juvandum, Medicandum tam animi quam Corporis morbis; atque ad ipsos Cacodemones pellendos & fugandos*. I shall not trouble you with a draught of this Spell; because I have not yet had an opportunity of learning, whether it may not be an ordinary one, and to be met with (among others of the same nature) in *Paracelsus* or *Cornelius Agrippa*.

If this conjecture be not allowable; I have, Sr, one more which (it may be) you will think more plausible than the former. For if, instead of making the third and fourth Letters to be two К К. И И. we should suppose them to be †. †. E. E. the word will then be *Ryeeburu*; which I take to signify, in the old *Danish* Language, *Cæmeterium*. or *Cadaverum Sepulchrum*. For, tho the true old *Runic* word for *Cadaver* be usually written \*R† Hrae; yet the *H* may, without any violence to the Orthography of that tongue, be omitted at pleasure; and then the difference of spelling the word, here at *Beaucaastle*, and on some of the ragged Monuments in *Denmark*, will not

be great. And for the countenancing of this latter Reading, I think the above mentioned *Checquer work* may be very available : since in that we have a notable Emblem of the *Tumuli*, or burying places of the Antients. (Not to mention the early custome of erecting Crosses and Crucifixes in Church-yards: which perhaps, being well weighed, might prove another encouragement to this second Reading.) I know the Checquer to be the Arms of the *Vaux's*, or *De Vallibus*, the old Proprietours of this part of the North; but that, I presume, will make nothing for our turn. Because this & the other carved work on the Cross, must of necessity be allow'd, to bear a more antient date then any of the Remains of that Name and Family; which cannot be run up higher then the Conquest.

On the East we have nothing but a few Flourishes, Draughts of Birds, Grapes and other Fruits: all which I take to be no more then the Statuary's Fancy.

On the South, Flourishes and conceits, as before, and towards the bottom, the following decay'd Inscription.

|| ✠. DB. . . . ✠ RMT. ||

The Defects in this short piece are sufficient to discourage me from attempting to expound it. But (possibly) it may be read thus.

Gag Ubbo Erlat, i. e.

*Latrones Ubbo Vicit.*

I confess this has no Affinity (at least, being thus interpreted) with the foregoing Inscription: but may well enough suit with the manners of both antient and modern Inhabitants of this Town and Country.

Upon your pardon and Correction, S<sup>r</sup>, of the Imperinencies and Mistakes in this, which I shall humbly hope  
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for,) I shall trouble you with my further observations on the Font at *Bridekirk*; and to all your other Commands shall pay that ready obedience which becomes,

*Carlile,*

Nov. 2.

1685.

S<sup>r</sup>,

*Your most obliged and*

*Faithfull Servant*

WILL. NICOLSON.

*A Letter from Mr Nicolson to S<sup>r</sup> W<sup>m</sup>. Dugdale ; concerning a Runic Inscription on the Font at Bridekirk.*

Hon<sup>d</sup>. S<sup>r</sup>,

*Carlile ; Nov. 23, 1685.*

**M**Y Worthy and good Lord, our Bishop, was lately pleased to acquaint me, that you were desirous to have my thoughts of the Inscription on the Font at *Bridekirk* in this County. I am, S<sup>r</sup>, extremely conscious of the rashness of bringing any thing of mine to the view of so discerning an Antiquary; but, withal, very tender of disobeying so great and worthy a Person. I know you were pleased to make your own observations upon it, in your Visitation of these parts, when *Norroy*: and I shall hope that you will give me an opportunity of rectifying, by yours, my following conjectures.

1. The Fabrick of this Monument does, I think, fairly enough evince that 'tis Christian; and that it is now used to the same purpose for which it 'twas at first designed. M<sup>r</sup> *Cambden* (tho' not acquainted with the Characters of the Inscription, yet) seems to fancy thus much: and, for

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proof of his opinion, brings a notable Quotation out of *S<sup>t</sup> Paulinus's* Epistles. But he needed not to have sent us so far off for a Voucher ; if he had taken good notice of the Imagery on the East side of this stone ; as I doubt not, *S<sup>r</sup>*, but you have done. We have there, fairly represented, a person in a long Sacerdotal Habit dipping a Child into the water ; and a Dove (the Embleme, no doubt, of the *H. Ghost*;) hovering over the Infant. Now, *S<sup>r</sup>*, I need not acquaint you, that the Sacrament of Baptism was antiently administered by plunging into the water, in the Western as well as Eastern parts of the Church ; and that the *Gothic* word *𐌳𐌹𐌸𐌹𐌸𐌰* (*Mar*, 1. 8. And *Luc*. 3. 7. and 12.) the *German* word *taufen*, the *Danish* *Døbe*, and the *Belgic* *doopen*, doe as clearly make out that practise, as the *Greek* word *βαπτίζω* : Nor, that they may all seem to be deriv'd from [*ἁπλῆς*] another word of the same Language and signification ; and are evidently akin to our *English* *Dip*, *Deep*, and *Depth*. Indeed our *Saxon* Ancestors expressed the Action of Baptism by a word of a different Import from the rest. For, in the forementioned place of *S<sup>t</sup> Mark's* Gospell, their Translation has the Text thus : *le eoƿ pulliƷe on ƿætere*. he eoƿ pullað on halgum Ʒapƿe 7 i. e. *Ego vos aquis Baptizo ; ille vos Spiritu Sancto Baptizabit*. Where the word pullian or pulligean signifies only simply *Lavare* : whence the *Latin* word *Fullo*, and our *Fuller* have their Original. But from hence to conclude that the *Saxons* did not use dipping in the Sacrament of Baptism, is somewhat too harsh an Argument.

2. There are other Draughts on the North and West side of the Font, which may very probably make for our purpose : but with these (as not thoroughly understanding them, and having not had an opportunity of getting them drawn in paper) I shall not trouble you at present.

3. On the South side of the stone we have the Inscription ; which I have taken care accurately to write out. And 'tis as follows :

†R.	IVARF	*†	‡	‡	IPR	†	†	‡	‡	†	†
‡	†	‡	‡	‡	‡	†	†	‡	‡	‡	†

Now, these kind of Characters are well enough known, (since *Ol. Wormius's* great Industry in making us acquainted with the *Literatura Runica*), to have bin chiefly used by the *Pagan* Inhabitants of *Denmark*, *Sweden*, and the other Northern Kingdoms ; and the *Danes* are said to have swarmed mostly in these parts of our *Island*. Which two considerations seem weighty enough to persuade any man, at first sight, to conclude that the Font is a *Danish* Monument. But then on the other hand, we are sufficiently assured, that the Heathen *Saxons* did also make use of these *Runæ* ; as is plainly evident from the frequent mention of *Runcpæptigen* and *Runczapar* in many of the Monuments of that Nation, both in Print and Manuscript still to be met with. Besides, we must not forget that both *Danes* and *Saxons* are indebted to this Kingdom for this Christianity : and therefore thus far, their pretensions to a *Runic* (Christian) Monument may be thought equal. Indeed some of the Letters (as *Ð*, *Ʒ* and *ȝ*) seem purely *Saxon* ; being not to be met with among *Wormius's* many Alphabets : and the words themselves (if I mistake them not) come nearer to the Antient *Saxon* Dialect, than the *Danish*. However, let the Inscription speak for it self : and I question not but 'twill convince any competent and judicious Reader that 'tis *Danish*. Thus therefore I have ventured to read and explain it :

*Er Ekard han men egroeten. and to dis men red wer Taner men brogten. i. e.*

Here *Ekard* was converted ; and to this Mans Example were the *Danes* brought. There.

There are only two things in the Inscription (thus Interpreted) that will need an Explanation.

1. Who this *E kard* was? And this is indeed a Question of that Difficulty, that I confess, I am not able exactly to answer it. The proper name it self is ordinary enough in the Northern Histories; though Variouslly written: As, *Echardus*, *Echinardus*, *Eginardus*, *Ecardus*, and *Eckhardus*. 'Tis certainly a name of Valour, as all others of the like Termination; such as, *Bernhard*, *Everhard*, *Gothard*, *Reinhard*, &c. So that, it may well become a General, or other great officer in the *Danish* Army: and such we have just reason to believe him to have been, who is here drawn into an example for the rest of his Countreymen. Our Historians are not very particular in their accounts of the several Incurfions and Victories of the *Danes*; and their own writers much more imperfect: and therefore, in cases of this nature, we must content our selves with probable conjectures.

2. *Han men egroeten*; which, rendered *Verbatim*, is *Have men turn'd*, i. e. was turn'd. A phrase, to this day, very familiar in most dialects of the antient *Celtic* tongue; though lost in our *English*. In the *High-Dutch* 'tis especially obvious; as, *Man Saget*, *Man hat gesagt*, *Man lobet*, &c. And the *French* Impersonals (*On dit*, *On fait*, &c.) are of the same strain; and evident Arguments that the *Teutonic* and *Gaulish* Tongues were antiently nearakin.

The Characters † ‡ and § are manifest Abbreviations of several Letters into one: of which sort we have great variety of examples in several of *Wormius's* Books: And such I take the Letter Ð to be, instead of † and ‡; and not the *Saxon* Ð. I must believe ¶ to be borrowed from the *Saxons*: and 3 I take to be a corruption of their ¶ or W. The rest has little of Difficulty in it. Only the Language of the whole seems a mixture of the



the *Danish* and *Saxon* tongues: but that can be no other then the natural effect of the two Nations being jumbled together in this part of the World. Our Borderers, to this day, speak a Leash of Languages (*Brittish, Saxon, and Danish*) in one; and 'tis hard to determine, which of those three nations has the greatest share in the Mottly Breed.

Sr,

Your, &c. W. N.

*An account of the Latitude of Constantinople, and Rhodes, Written by the Learned Mr John Greaves, sometime Professor of Astronomy in the University of Oxford, and directed to the most Reverend James Usher, Arch-Bishop of Armagh.*

UPON Intimation of your *Grace's* desires, and upon importunity of some Learned Men, having finished a Table, as a key to your *Grace's* exquisite disquisition, touching *Asia* properly so called; I thought my self obliged to give both you and them a reason, why in the situation of *Byzantium*, and the *Island Rhodes*, (which two eminent places I have made the *ωσανηματα* and bounds of the Chart,) I dissent from the traditions of the Antients, and from the Tables of our late and best Geographers, and consequently dissenting in these, have been necessitated to alter the Latitudes, if not Longitudes, of most of the remarkable City's of this discourse. And first for *Byzantium*, the received Latitude